Mélanges CRAPEL n° 40/1

MINDFULNESS AND ADVISING IN LANGUAGE LEARNING : AN ALTERNATIVE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Mots-clés

Pleine conscience, conseil en apprentissage de langue, centres de langue en auto accès, compétences de conseiller

Keywords

Mindfulness, mindful advising in language learning, mindful language learning, self-access centres, advising skills

Résumé

Au cours de ces dernières années, face à l'augmentation des niveaux de stress et d'anxiété, on note un intérêt croissant pour les applications de la pleine conscience comme approche constructive pour aborder ces questions. Dans le domaine de l'éducation, un certain nombre d'études ont identifié la pleine conscience comme une stratégie potentielle pour améliorer à la fois le bien-être et le rendement scolaire des élèves. Le présent article, théorique et exploratoire, envisage la possibilité de recourir à la pleine conscience pour le conseil en apprentissage des langues. Il pourrait jeter les bases de projets de recherche afin de développer et évaluer l'impact de la pleine conscience sur la pratique du conseil en apprentissage des langues et proposer par la suite des parcours de formation pour les conseillers.

Abstract

In recent years a growing concern about increased levels of stress and anxiety has attracted interest in applications of mindfulness and mindfulness training as a constructive approach to addressing these issues. In Education, a number of studies have identified in mindfulness a potential strategy to both enhance students' wellbeing and to improve academic performance. Against this background, the paper considers the potential integration of mindfulness in advising in language learning. It is intended that this exploratory theoretical paper will lay the foundations for further

research projects developing and evaluating mindfulness in advising for language learning practice and subsequently propose additional CPD (continuing professional development) pathways for advisers.

Introduction

This initial, exploratory, theoretical paper intends to offer a new direction in advising in language learning research by investigating its potential synergies with mindfulness research and practice. The professional background of this author - with an international reputation in language learning advising and expertise as a qualified mindfulness practitioner - has been the premise for this comparative literature review. As outlined below, there is already a developed body of research into mindfulness. However, the focus of this paper is novel in suggesting a research framework to evaluate the potential role of mindfulness in language learning in a self-access context and to build capacity in an, as yet, unchartered interdisciplinary field.

These issues need to be considered in the context of a growing global interest in mindfulness. This includes Higher Education (Soloway et al., 2011) where mindfulness is increasingly proposed, inter alia, as a constructive approach to addressing issues relating to students' and staff's well-being. Within the UK context, recent reports (HEFCE Report, 2015; NUS Survey, 2015)[1] have noted an increase in the level of stress in university students with 80% reporting feelings of mental distress, 70% demotivation, 66% depression and 55% anxiety. Amongst the reasons listed are: course workload deadlines; exams; balancing study and other commitments; grades/academic performance; personal, family or relationship problems, and financial difficulties. Many of these reports emphasise the interdependence of learning and well-being and the need to develop socially supportive and inclusive teaching and learning environments. Against this background, a number of studies have reported that mindfulness can offer a potential skillset which contributes to enhancing students' well-being and improving academic performance (Zenner et al., 2014; Shapiro et al., 2008).

Concurrently, the discourse surrounding the development of the global graduate[2] and citizen stresses the importance of skills such as competence in intercultural communication, resilience, adaptability, the ability to self-improve and self-regulate (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2013), patience, ability to balance varying demands, a positive attitude to problem solving, emotional intelligence, and respect

[1]HEFCE Report (2015) http://www.studentminds.org.uk/uploads/3/7/8/4/3784584/summary_of_the_hefce_report.pdf
NUS Survey (2017) www.nus.org.uk/Global/Campaigns/20130517MentalDistressSurveyOverview.pdf https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/dec/14/majority-of-students-experience-mental-health-issues-says-nus-survey [accessed 28/02/2019]

[2] http://www.cbi.or g.uk/insight-and-analysis/helping-the-uk-thrive/ [accessed 28/02/2019]

for differences (Gueldner & Feuerborn, 2016). In less academic contexts, there is hardly a magazine or newspaper that has not addressed concerns about a burnt out generation and highlighted a rise in stress-related illnesses, anxiety and depression[3]. Mindfulness-based approaches are amongst those suggested to help build resilience, manage stress and create a better quality of life.

In the specific academic context of language learning, there is also growing research focused on the role of feelings and emotions of teachers/advisers and learners as blockers or enablers in learning conversations (Dewaele et al., 2018; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014; Oxford, 2017). Furthermore, there is an emerging interest in applications from positive psychology to help address some of the barriers generated by specific emotions (MacIntyre et al., 2016). Some have highlighted the significant role played by emotions in second language learning (Boudreau et al., 2018) and in advising sessions (Tassinari & Ciekanski, 2013).

In the more specific context of advising in a self-access centre, it has also been observed that the use of skilled pedagogic dialogue can create a third, safe space (Mozzon-McPherson, 2017b) where learners feel they can experiment with, and explore their responses to, their language learning; in so doing they develop a much closer connection with their 'selves' during their learning journey (McCarthy, 2016; Gremmo, 2009). Other works have indirectly described aspects of mindfulness in their analysis of the skilful use of active listening and focus on intentionality and awareness in advising sessions (Mozzon-McPherson, 2017a; Karlsson, 2012, 2013; Gu, 2012).

Furthermore, in some studies it is noticeable how the inter-relation between formal (in the classroom) and informal learning (e.g.in self-access centres, cafes, whilst abroad) is crucial to establishing a positive learning framework and mindset, and providing learners with cognitive, metacognitive and affective strategies which will help them address with confidence challenges which might arise when learning a second language. This set of skills and strategies are aligned with those expected from global graduates and citizens and observed in mindfulness practitioners, and share a common goal to equip individuals for effective, positive, lifelong learning.

[3] https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/dec/18/mindfulness-boosts-student-mental-health-during-exams-cambridge-university-study-finds [accessed 28/02/2019]
https://www.theguardian.com/women-in-leadership/2014/jun/09/how-meditation-brought-me-back-from-a-breakdown [accessed 28/02//2019]

Against this background, this paper will first review theories and practices of mindfulness and a range of contexts in which mindfulness has been adopted. It will then compare advising in language learning (ALL) and mindfulness practices, explore their values, concerns, goals, approaches and skills and identify common grounds. In particular, consideration will be given to the ways in which the theoretical framework and spaces (self-access centres), within which advising predominantly operates, can positively, and explicitly, embrace aspects of mindfulness to further contribute to addressing some of the concerns listed above (e.g. anxiety, inability to concentrate, feelings of inadequacy, lack of awareness in one's own abilities to self-improve and self-regulate, demotivation) and often reported by advisees.

1. Mindfulness: definitions, contexts, claims and practices

For the purposes of this paper, mindfulness is here defined as a moment by moment awareness which requires the mind to stay focused on the 'here and now' and be attuned with what happens around, as well as in, us (Thera, 1972, 1998) in response to the present reality (Hahn, 1976).

Such an approach is strongly influenced by Buddhist teachings. These suggest that, in order to move beyond embedded habits of the mind and to become free of some of the distortions and confusions which we experience, we need to train ourselves to attend very carefully and intentionally to the process by which we construct past and future experience in the present moment (Olendzki, 2012: 25). This ability to focus undivided attention on one's own present experience has, in turn, generated a series of techniques to help train the mind address potential distractions considered unhelpful in dealing with one's life and related environments.

Although mindfulness has its historic roots in Buddhism (Hahn, 1999), the more secular tradition and related research into mindfulness finds its origins in the work of Kabat-Zinn (1990, 2003) and Shapiro et al. (2006). Kabat-Zinn created a mindful-reduction stress programme (MBSR) and established the foundation of modern mindfulness. His programme, and its many variants (e.g. MAAS, Brown & Ryan, 2003; FMI, Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory, Buchheld et al., 2001; KIMS, the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills, Baer et al., 2004) are now widely available in health organisations, hospitals and also form part of leadership and workplace programmes (Hyland et al., 2015; Baer, 2014). By contrast, a group of psychologists

(Shapiro et al., 2006), focused on providing a theoretical model for mindfulness in order to create a common framework for further enquiry. Their research usefully identified three core axioms involved in mindfulness practice: Intention, Attention and Attitude. They observed that when these three axioms are simultaneously engaged, they generate positive effects.

There has also been considerable research into mindfulness practices, and their related benefits, in other disciplines; amongst the most developed of these are psychotherapy (Davis & Hayes, 2011; Germer et al., 2005) and health (Irving et al., 2009; Dobkin et al., 2011; Creswell, 2017). Many personal benefits have been identified including: the strengthening of the immune system, reduced blood pressure, better sleeping patterns, increased concentration, reduced physical fatigue, decreased anxiety and stress, sharper memory and improved cognitive processing and emotional balance. Table 1 provides examples of a number of mindfulness-based exercises and their claimed benefits.

1.	**Breathing meditation**	To develop focused attention.
2.	**Notice your thoughts**	To sharpen the habit of observing one's reaction to surroundings, one's emotions. To learn to suspend judgement, relinquish power given to emotions.
3	**Journal keeping**	This requires spontaneous writing using a form of stream of consciousness. Complete focus on putting thoughts on paper with no filters.
4	**Create a ritual**	To create undivided time and space for yourself. Choice of place, attention to the actions you do, contemplation of the benefits. Giving significance and importance to the task in the moment.
5	**Set a daily intention and visualise its accomplishment**	To help self-discipline, to develop determination and to assist the development of a clear mind-set. This increases memory power, relieves stress and increases perception and creativity.

Table 1. Sample of mindfulness-based exercises from MBSR programmes

Mindfulness can be formal or informal. Informally it can be practised throughout the day and be fully integrated in everyday activities (e.g. eating, cooking, washing the dishes, or brushing your teeth). More formal mindfulness, instead, involves a guided session with a set of meditation activities, reflections and discussions. A meditation activity typically consists of initially directing attention to a

specific focus, such as the breath, a sensation, a feeling (e.g. loving-kindness), or other attentional 'anchors'. A wide range of tools are also mentioned in different studies that have used mindfulness to help with concentration. They range from the simple use of post-it notes with specific instructions or questions (e.g. are you here? Stop and focus on your breathing), the adoption of specific cards with quotes to reflect upon as part of one's decided object of a meditation task. There are also mindfulness clocks and apps freely downloadable whose alarm reminds you to return to the present. Some of these activities can take 1-3 minutes, others up to 20 minutes or longer. Some tools involve music, others are completely silent; some make use of logs and journals, others of audio diaries; some use colours and others individual or collective mantras. At this juncture, it should be noted that several of these techniques are also reported in advising research (Mynard & Carson, 2012; Kato, 2012).

In addition to being integrated in professional practices such as counselling, psychotherapy, sport coaching (Skinner et al., 2008; Compton & Hoffman, 2012) and the military (Jha et al., 2010; Jha et al., 2015), the impact of mindfulness on intelligence and cognition has been studied by neuroscientists. Nataraja (2012) observed that mindfulness practice increases the plasticity of the brain; in particular, positive effects are detected in the brain regions concerned with executive functioning (i.e. memory, attention, problem solving, verbal reasoning, multi-tasking) (Greason & Cashwell, 2009; Hölzel et al., 2011) and the regulation of emotions and behaviours (Corcoran et al., 2010). In a professional context, mindfulness has been claimed to improve task performance, management of pressure and conflicts, more effective decision making, problem solving and interpersonal relations due to better listening and speaking (communication skills).

As Hart (2004:30) powerfully argues, "*these approaches cultivate an inner technology of knowing and thereby a technology of learning and pedagogy".* In modern mindfulness-based programmes, this cultivation of "*the technology of knowing"* includes methods intended to calming the mind and its busyness, ultimately contributing to deepening insight, awareness, and concentration. Amongst these methods are: guided meditation, reflective journals and logs, silence practice, music, art, poetry, collective reflection, and questioning. Hart suggests a range of techniques related to some of those just mentioned and argues that they can enhance the quality of learning in the classroom.

Mindfulness practice, and related research on its impact, is also becoming prominent in schools as a means to support students and teachers (McCallum & Price, 2010; Greenberg & Harris, 2012). In educational research, findings claim improved levels of attention following mindfulness training among children (Napoli et al., 2005), adolescents (Zylowska et al., 2008), and adults (Hyland, 2010). Furthermore, studies on the neurobiology of mindfulness in adults (Meiklejonh et al., 2012) suggest that sustained mindfulness practice can enhance attentional and emotional self-regulation and promote flexibility, pointing toward significant potential benefits for both teachers (Bernay, 2014) and students (Tregenza, 2008). In applying a mindfulness programme to the daily teaching routines of a group of primary teachers, Albrecht et al., (2012) observed that teachers were able to gain a new awareness of their teaching habits and notice particularly effective strategies and ineffective ones. Shapiro et al. (2006: 6) described this heightened awareness as a "*rotation in consciousness*" which is basic to human development and is enhanced through mindfulness practice. Other mindfulness instructors also noted that class participants commonly develop this capacity – moving from a position where one is completely identified with one's experience to a position in which the experience becomes available for observation (McCown et al., 2011). Importantly, it was noticed that the process of "(1) *re-perceiving does not create distance and disconnection from one's experience but rather enables one to look, feel and know more deeply; importantly, the 'observing self' is seen 'as a temporary platform for observation and questioning'*" (McCown et al., 2011: 66).

In second language acquisition and language teaching, prominent studies which link aspects of mindfulness to language learning are those of Ellen Langer (1989, 1997), Houston and Paaige (2007), and Johnson & Golombek, (2016). Langer (1997) argued that language teachers should not be focusing on testing facts about 'what is out there'. She considers this emphasis on testing knowledge 'mindless' and closely linked to a set of (mis) conceptions about second language acquisition. According to Langer, people act mindlessly when they rely on distinctions made in the past, rather than the present. On a mindful-mindless continuum, at the extreme end mindless learners see things from a single perspective, become rigid and certain, and fail to consider context.

Langer considers that there are two main ways in which mindlessness comes about: single exposure and repetition. Single exposure means initially processing

information without questioning other ways of understanding it. Within the context of adult language learning, for instance, this might mean learning words and expressions in one single context or from one single perspective. Repetition is closely related to single exposure and it involves doing things in the same way all the time. In language teaching this approach might be carried out by always following the same lesson format (e.g. Presentation/Practice/Production) or always using the same question patterns or exercises that require learners to perform a task in the same way regardless of the context. Repetition results in a lack of freshness and curiosity and in the creation of a false sense of certainty which can cause learner's confusion and distress when the context changes. Langer argues that when individuals are told there is only one right way to engage with material, or perform a task, it limits their ability to take ownership of the material and use the information in creative, flexible ways.

By contrast, mindfulness requires centering on how we respond to the world, which, in her argument, produces more meaningful and long-lasting effects as it allows learners to re-interpret / re-see a specific activity from their own experiences and insights, anchoring content and process more deeply. This mindful approach equips learners to understand and manage differences of views and approaches, and notice their relations/reactions to such differences more effectively. Therefore, Langer describes mindfulness as the ability to create options and this perspective requires an individual to rely upon one's own experience, rather than that of others or the agreed view on how to experience an event/an activity. She observed that when this mindful approach is adopted, learners are more open to experiment, to see beyond the situation/scenario provided and are more prepared to offer solutions, determine their objectives and critically reflect on their outcomes. Houston and Paaige (2007) highlight in their study that the main shift from intelligence-based language teaching to mindfulness-based is a fundamental difference in the quality of the learner's performances and list enhanced self-determination and self-regulation amongst the core benefits. As we shall see in section 2, many of these claims and observations inform the approach and practice of advising in language learning.

In this first section we have defined mindfulness, examined its claimed benefits and uses across different practices and disciplinary fields and identified some key axioms and tools which constitute the practice and its context. The next section examines a particular second language learning context, a self-access centre and its

language learning advisory service, within which aspects of mindfulness can be identified, common values recognised and similar intentions shared.

2. Advising in Language Learning: definitions, practices and contexts

Advising in language learning (ALL) involves a process of purposeful dialogic interventions (Gremmo et al., 1985; Ciekanski, 2007; Mozzon-McPherson, 2012) ultimately intended to create the conditions enabling a language learner to:

- set their goals
- plan their resources and activities
- select and review their strategies and contexts for learning
- and finally evaluate their outcomes.

There is, therefore, commonality with the work of Langer and Houston and Paaige, cited in the previous section. Between setting such conditions and reaching complete self-directedness and self-regulation, there are many stages (Hu & Zhang, 2017) and these may involve several forms of learning conversations to assist this process (Little et al., 2017) (e.g. with teachers, peers, language learning advisers, native speakers, and ultimately oneself).

ALL and its related professionals (language learning advisers) appeared in the education literature in the late 1980s when increased investment in, and use of, new technologies in language learning encouraged the opening of self-access language centres (SACs). Such spaces emerged in universities (Sheerin, 1991; Gardner & Miller, 1999), in communities as multimedia multilingual libraries[4] and also as private language centres (Ehrman et al., 2003; Victori, 2000). Their main purpose was to offer a learning space where students could autonomously develop their language practice through flexible and personalised pathways (Rubin, 2007). The initial emphasis of self-access centres was, therefore, on accessibility (to a wealth of language resources), flexibility (through arrays of both new and more traditional technologies, over flexible opening times) and autonomous learning (mainly complementary to, or independent from, formal classroom teaching).

Consequently, as Gardner & Miller observed (1999), most centres were originally managed by audio-visual/ICT technicians /advisers (emphasis on the

[4] http://www.provinz.bz.it/italian-culture/languages/multilingual-centre.asp.

technological use of equipment) and/or resource managers/librarians (emphasis on resources, clarity of information retrieval). However, it was noticed that where there was the presence of a language learning adviser with an emphasis on pedagogic, rather than technical, interventions, the centre was more efficiently utilised (Mozzon-McPherson & Vismans, 2001). This professional presence contributed to creating effective links between resources and technologies, existing curricular requirements and students' demands and needs (Cooker & Torpey, 2004; Thompson & Atkinson, 2010).

The shift from SAC to SALL (Self-Access Language Learning), from the space to the self-directed learning process, was fundamental for the development of research into advising and was informed by research into learner autonomy (Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1988; Little, 1991; Esch 1994). This focus on accessing the self in the learning process identified the substantial potential of advising in fostering learner autonomy (Gremmo & Riley, 1995; Riley, 1997) and the benefits of the presence of dedicated language learning advisers in self-access centres (Rubin, 2007).

Language learning advisers, in fact, not only engage in one-to-one learning conversations but also organise group workshops, deliver language awareness, language learning strategies and study skills sessions, arrange and monitor tandem learning schemes (reciprocal language exchanges), use and design different learning resources and strategies to reflect their learners' profiles and ensure that the self-directed learning experience is resourceful, effective and fulfilling and its learning space supportive, purposeful and useful (Yamashita & Mynard, 2015; Hobbs & Dofs, 2016; Kjisik et al., 2009). This approach has been replicated and adapted to different cultural settings worldwide (Valdivia et al., 2011; Siqueira Nicolaides & Magno e Silva, 2017; Reinbold, 2018), generating a wealth of new research and insightful practices (Kato & Mynard, 2016; Kato, 2017) which also extend advising skills into teaching contexts (Reinders, 2012a; Benson, 2011)

During each of their advising activities, their ultimate aim is to set the conditions for learners to gradually take charge of their own learning (Holec, 1981). This requires a sensitive balancing act between helping a learner to learn how to learn (development of self-directedness), and helping the learner to deal with the specific issue they ask for immediate advice (Gremmo, 2009). Equally, in this theoretical perspective of advising, the centrality of the learner and their multiple

selves comes to the fore. Their habits, attitudes, beliefs, feelings and emotions are crucial to addressing both the immediate language learning problem and the long-term effects of specific interventions (development of self-regulation). Equally, advisers have to carefully and mindfully be aware of their own habits, attitudes, beliefs, their feelings and emotions when engaging in a learning conversation.

As in mindfulness, in advising there is seldom right or wrong, but possible options recognised by the learner as suitable in that moment in that context. This can, at times, be disorienting for a learner who may come to an adviser looking for quick solutions to perceived simple language learning issues (e.g. understand a specific grammar, manage time, improve vocabulary, practise listening). It is, therefore, necessary for the adviser to establish clear rules of reciprocity, joint commitment and trust. In advising, the supportive tools, provided to help smooth aspects of the learning pathway, are jointly negotiated. Parts of the learning journey may be individual, while others may be in partnership in the recognition that every discovery may help the learner near the intended goal - and in this attentive process they may experience unexpected outcomes/needs. These unforeseen developments are as important as the original intended goal as it helps learners understand the complexity and richness of the skills engaged in the learning process and prepares them for a culture of lifelong learning and self-regulation.

In advising sessions, a learner's emotions - from anxiety to frustration, confusion, delusion etc. - can act as blockers or enablers of the learning path (Tassinari, 2016). Furthermore, advisers have to ensure that they keep their own emotions, contradictions, values and beliefs in check and be sensitive to the learner's viewpoint (Yasuda, 2018). Such perspectives and interpretations are often informed by the adviser's own beliefs and assumptions, shaped by habits and behaviour learnt over time, expressed through forms of dialogue (or absence of) and filtered through emotions (Boudreau et al, 2018). Advising is therefore about balancing perspectives and interpretations of a specific language and its related object of interest and concern.

Hence, at the heart of many studies there is a distinct focus on a person-centred approach, a specific attention to the need to use pedagogic dialogue to elicit reflection, awareness and learning (Mozzon-McPherson, 2017b*;* Kato, 2017), a careful and caring concern for learners' stories (Karlsson, 2013), and an emphasis on reciprocal authenticity and trust during the advising experience (Gremmo, 2007;

Tassinari & Ciekanski, 2013). The latter calls for co-construction of knowledge and competence where expert and novice swap roles in the course of negotiating what to focus on, how to go about it, when to review the outcome, what to do next. In this process, emotions play a major role too as enablers or blockers (Bown & White, 2010). This becomes a gradual, sensitive development of self-regulation and self-directedness.

In the last decade, research into advising practices has increasingly focused on the need to better understand the reality on the ground - labelled by Ludwig & Mynard as 'advising in action' (2012) - and to equip advisers with specific training tools to develop as reflective practitioners (Mynard & Ludwig, 2014; Kato & Mynard, 2016). In particular, emphasis has shifted to the skills of advising, firstly mapped by Kelly (1996) and now regular object of study by many applied linguistics researchers interested in investigating the impact of targeted dialogic advising interventions on 1. advisers and advisees (Gremmo, 2007; Yasuda, 2018; Karlsson, 2013); 2. sustained self-directed learning (Thornton, 2010), 3. positive language achievements (Hobbs & Dofs, 2016), 4. a happier language learning experience (Tassinari & Ciekanski, 2013), 5. formal (Reinders, 2012b; Carette & Castillo, 2004) and in informal settings (Thornton, 2018).

Kelly was the first to introduce a fundamental difference between the macro-skills primarily applied in a teacher-learner dialogue and the micro-skills distinctively applied in adviser-learner dialogues (see Table 2 below). The subtle difference lies in who leads and owns the dialogic stages and how they are performed. Initiating, goal setting, guiding, modelling, supporting, giving feedback emphasise content over process, an expert-novice relationship and a relatively passive view of the learner. By contrast, a targeted use of micro-skills shifts the perspective of advisers-advisee/teacher-student to one of co-learners. In this partnership adviser and advisee take turn in leading the learning conversation, with a gradual ownership of the direction of the learning process to the advisee.

Macro-skills	**Micro-skills**
Initiating: Introducing new directions and options	**Attending**: Giving the learner undivided attention
Goal-setting: Helping the learner to formulate specific goals and objectives.	**Restating**: Repeating in your own words what the learner says
Guiding: Offering advice and information; direction and ideas; suggesting.	**Paraphrasing**: Simplifying the learner's statements by focussing on the essence of the message
Modelling Demonstrating target behaviour.	**Summarising**: Bringing together the main elements of a message
Supporting: Providing encouragement and reinforcement.	**Questioning**: Using open questions to encourage self-exploration
Giving Feedback: Expressing a constructive reaction to the learner's efforts	**Interpreting**: Offering explanations for learner experiences
Evaluating: Appraising the learner's process and achievement	**Reflecting feelings**: Surfacing the emotional content of learner statements
Linking: Connecting the learner's goals and tasks to wider issues	**Empathising**: Identifying with the learner's experience and perception
Concluding: Bringing a sequence of works to a conclusion	**Confronting**: Surfacing discrepancies and contradictions in the learner's communication

Table 2. Language counselling skills (Kelly, 1996: 95-96)

Acquiring these micro-skills requires professional training; these skills need to be practised, reflected upon and constantly reviewed (Mozzon-McPherson, 2017a). On the part of the adviser, the skilful dialogic application of attending, paraphrasing, questioning, reflecting and empathising requires an ability, willingness and readiness to listen actively and reflect on the advisee's beliefs, values guiding the learning behaviour. Concurrently, advisers need to be aware of their values and beliefs and how they might influence their advising behaviour (Tassinari & Ciekanski, 2013; Tassinari, 2017). This helps to see and accept the person in front of them, suspend judgment and patiently support agreed choices whilst gradually handing over to the advisee the strategic learning tools required to become the full author of their learning journey (Karlsson, 2013).

Specifically, ALL research (Kato, 2017; McCarthy, 2016) has illustrated that the focus of an effective advising session starts with active listening; this entails the adviser's ability to observe, notice, feel, interpret and reflect whilst listening to the advisee's words. At times, this means performing the role of either a mirror or a 'megaphone', to amplify, reflect or distort what has been said in an attempt to ensure co-construction of meaning and negotiation of an agreed learning journey (Mozzon-McPherson, 2017b). The first step of any session is to observe, listen to and notice, the argument/s presented by the learner with regard to a specific need and identify a

possible starting point. This will then become the intention of the practice. In this balancing act the adviser suspends judgement and, instead, questions in order to understand how best to support the learner and equip them with the skills to eventually self-regulate (Oxford, 2017). This approach views the other's needs (the learner's needs in this case) as legitimate and authentic, and starts from the premise that the learner who comes voluntarily to see an adviser has expressed the intention to act on a need, a problem, or an interest.

To conclude professional advising skills help advisers and advisees:

- describe an incident or a problem and decide how to read their role in it;
- understand how, and why, they may approach a learning task with focus and determination, precision and reflection, or with superficiality, approximation and disengagement or anything between these two extremes;
- negotiate possible, suitable learning pathways which take into account their emotions, beliefs and experiences;
- create positive conditions and contexts for learning;
- establish lifelong learning strategies.

3. Mindfulness and Advising in Language Learning: synergies in the making

From the above literature on mindfulness and advising practices, clear identifiable synergies emerge. Amongst these are:

- **a person-centred approach** which takes into account the whole person and engages cognitive, meta-cognitive and affective strategies: this shifts the emphasis on training one's mind to identify learning needs, tasks, problems as positive moments of personal growth as well and knowledge gain;
- **an emphasis on intentionality** which sees self-help and self-regulation skills as an integral aspect of the learning conversation and an ultimate desirable goal: this enhances the ability to adapt and adjust to unforeseen circumstances or unfamiliar contexts;
- **an attention to emotions** as important enablers or blockers in self-development and learning: this strengthens one's ability to take control of one's understanding of our surroundings and reactions to them;

- **a strong heuristic value on understanding and making choices** (intentionality): this provides a greater awareness on our own accountability in relation to the choices we make but also our ability to influence change;
- **an explicit focus on awareness** of the underpinning learner's assumptions, values and beliefs in order to understand one's responses to specific problems and needs and find long-term solutions to them;
- **use of active listening techniques** which encourage awareness of self, relations with others and appreciation of our surroundings;
- **suspension of judgement**: working on a right/wrong answers approach can discourage learners from developing their own framework for determining what is, or is not, an appropriate answer and can create a dependence on others to gain feedback rather than an ability to lead change and self-improve.

Both practices have a holistic and lifelong learning approach, they invoke self-discipline and personal accountability in the process. They emphasise reflection, intention, acceptance, attention and attitude. In particular, mindfulness offers interesting exercises which can help in sharpening focus, developing resilience, adaptability and an attentive mind. When applied to language learning, this integration might contribute to better understanding one's own, and in turn other's, emotions (e.g. anxiety, frustration, irritation, shame, enjoyment) when engaged in a specific task. Furthermore it can help advisers and advisees to better manage their energy levels, heighten their adaptability towards unexpected events/outcomes and increase efficiency and efficacy.

From an advising practitioner's perspective, in addition to mindful listening techniques, advisers may want to consider integrating an array of mindfulness-related tasks into their practice, when/if appropriate. Table 3 proposes a sample of tasks which logically maps Kelly's micro-skills (in bold) into MBSR techniques and identifies the objective related to each exercise in the context of language learning.

1	Breathing or body scan meditation (**attending**)	To increase quality of attention and perception and decrease anxiety (e.g. prior to an exam, or a situation identified by the learner as stress-inducing).
2	OND exercise: Observe, Notice, Describe **(attending, restating, paraphrasing, confronting)**	To heighten focus and concentration, improve memory connections and process emotions during a language learning task.
3	Stream of consciousness **(Attending, reflecting)**	To focus on strategies to anchor and develop memories of the language experience, improve memory connections, and process emotions.
4	Loud/silent and tandem reading exercise **(empathising, questioning, confronting)**	To focus on accessing self and the learning environment.
5	Rapping/chanting task (individual or collective) adviser-advisee select a series of useful tips/poweful quotes, words and repeat them as specific times (individual) or when together in an advising session **(attending, empathising, interpreting)**	To focus on intention, attention and determination and sharpen perception and self-awareness.

Table 3. Sample of mindfulness-based exercises for language learning

Concluding observations and reflections on possible limitations

This research paper has identified the potential merits of linking two practices (mindfulness and advising in language learning). The aim has been to evaluate the possible future value of this approach in creating an alternative supportive framework to help language learners, and advisers, develop self-regulated strategies and a positive mindset to address academic and lifelong learning challenges.

To understand this field it was initially necessary to examine the wide range of mindfulness applications already in existence and to analyse their theoretical perspectives, purpose, methods and outcomes. Across these studies it emerged that mindfulness contributes to *enhanced cognitive and academic performance* (including attention and concentration), *management of academic stress*, and the *development of the "whole person".* It has also been observed that mindfulness is a strategy that is being used with increased frequency and receiving mainstream acceptance globally as a means to improve both students' and teachers' well-being.

The paper has also illustrated that, as in mindfulness, advising in language learning involves a re-definition of individuals (advisers as well as advisees) in relation to their environment (e.g. their course, contexts for learning, motivation, assumptions). In this process, an explicit and intentional set of communicative strategies and skills is adopted to help learners gain a different insight into a problem or a need and address it with enhanced knowledge, confidence and competence.

Through the comparative review of advising and mindfulness, one compelling gap has also emerged: the need for a recognised professional development framework for advisers. There is still limited research on the profile of advisers, their background, their professional training as advisers, and their engagement with other disciplines. From the literature, most advisers are firstly language teachers, a minority also have a counselling or psychology background. Many are language degree students whose advising skills are acquired on the job. This is an aspect of advising research which is still in its infancy. Alternative perspectives can enrich this field and help address not only the cognitive, metacognitive and affective needs of learners but also those of advisers. Equally, within the academic research on mindfulness the profile of mindfulness practitioners is very broad. Whilst many come from a professional background in psychology, counselling and psychotherapy, others become mindfulness trainers initially for personal reasons and, subsequently, engage with it as a profession. Both disciplines (advising and mindfulness) have the potential to benefit from each other's practices, approaches, theoretical perspectives and research methodologies.

Furthermore, this paper has highlighted that both advising and mindfulness practices involve forms of inquiry which emphasise synergies between intention, attention, attitude and emotions. They both claim to help individuals cope with distractions and blocks, and develop better, more insightful, confident and emotionally intelligent attitudes.

Finally, this review has raised many questions which are worth of further exploration and practical investigation in joint interdisciplinary collaborative studies. Specifically, the issues to be addressed include:

- If advising is mindful communication work (Mozzon-McPherson, 2017a), and advisers are skilled mediators of spaces of dialogue, could mindfulness-based training help enhance the work of advisers?
- How can interventions in learning conversations be heightened by the use of mindfulness techniques?
- What kind of training and tools might be required in advising to evidence its impact?
- How can this approach positively impact on a renewed role of self-access centres as safe and confident learning spaces of well-being and happiness for 21st century universities?

- How can this alternative perspective contribute to the wider well-being of learners?
- Can mindfulness enrich the adviser-advisee relationship?

There is clearly the potential for further work but this article has established the foundations for developing interdiscursivity (Candlin and Maley, 1997) between these two existing practices, their discourses and their methods of enquiry. In so doing, it has also identified a set of potential methodological tools and practical exercises to be considered to measure the impact of this unchartered approach.

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